

Joint Meeting
Board of Commissioners and County Council
July 2, 2008 – 8:08 am

Meeting called to order by Commissioner President Rininger. Commissioners Rininger, Logsdon, Gogel, Board Attorney Lueken, Councilmen Ebert, Kroeger, Winsett, Cochenour, Bunner and Council Attorney Wetherill were present. Councilmen Spaetti and Kress were absent. Others in attendance were Gary Malone, of Umbaugh; Tom Schipp, of Universal Design; Lisa Gehlhausen, of Indiana 15; Community Corrections Director Janice Weber; and EMA Director Al Perdue.

Community Corrections Director Weber explained that the community corrections board has started looking into the possibility of building a Community Corrections Building using Department of Corrections (DOC) grant money. She stated that other counties have been able to build and maintain a community corrections building at no expense to the taxpayer. The building could have office spaces for community corrections, the prosecutor and child support. She further stated that they are still just doing research right now.

Kroeger stated that his main concern is how the county could pay for a new building.

Gary Malone, from Umbaugh, stated that there are three revenue streams that the county could use to fund a public safety building:

1. Property taxes, which will be more difficult with the new tax law changes.
2. COIT, borrow the money against COIT funding.
3. COIT and Property taxes, borrow the money against COIT and use property taxes as a back up.

Malone stated that the decision is driven by how much will be borrowed and for how long. Rininger stated that he felt it would be best to borrow against the COIT fund and use property taxes only as a back up. Malone stated that property taxes would probably not have to be used.

Rininger asked for comments on the public safety building:

Cochenour stated that he felt the county should build it. He also said that if there is any work that can be done “in house” by the highway workers, such as ground preparation, it should be done. He said the building should stay the same size, because the county could never build it too big. He would like to see the community get something out of it, like a community building.

Winsett stated that they do not have enough information about thing like utility cost or new employees. He said he is not necessarily against it but he wonders if it is really needed.

Perdue stated that it was determined several years ago that the EMA needs a central location and storage for the equipment that is now scattered in several different buildings. The new public safety building would offer a place for centralized training and meeting rooms. It would also be used as a shelter in the case of a major event or disaster. He stated that alternatives have been researched and they would not withstand a major earthquake or tornado. This building would withstand most anything, so the emergency operations would not be affected. He said during the last heavy rain the basement of the courthouse was flooded and the current EMA office was almost inoperable. He added that it was also thought to be a good idea since some county offices are currently paying rent.

Gehlhausen stated that FEMA has “pre-awarded” the grant to Spencer County. The official letter is delayed due to FEMA dealing with the flooding in Iowa.

Gogel stated that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity which will affect the current residents of the county as well as the future residents. He also stated that he is leaning toward more community space and less office space.

Ebert stated that there may not be an urgent need for the building but it will be beneficial for the community now and in the future. He stated that emergencies do happen and during the 4-H fair children are left unprotected from the elements. He agrees with Gogel that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. He further said that it will help with training our local firefighters and emergency workers; there needs to be a central location.

Wetherill stated that there needs to be more research into the community building idea. He stated that he is not sure it is appropriate to have wedding receptions and political events in a government building. He also stated that the old jail property needs to be looked at more.

Rininger stated that he thinks Community Corrections is looking at using that property. Weber stated that if a community corrections building is built it would have office space for the prosecutor and child support offices. She said the cost to the county would be tearing down the old building. She further stated that DOC has asked counties to pursue building county corrections buildings, because the state is so short on space. Kroeger stated that no grant is 100% and the county needs more information on the DOC grant.

Kroeger stated that the county can afford to fund the Public Safety Building through COIT and he is 100% convinced that the county needs to build it. What needs to be considered is how the county could pay for two buildings. Gogel stated that the Greene County Community Corrections Building is being paid for by the grant proceeds and the project income. Kroeger stated an analysis of what the county is paying in rent needs to be done, but it should offset the expenses for the new building.

Schipp stated that the county needs to put together what will go on the top floor of the public safety building and start looking at the ineligible costs.

Bunner stated that he believes the county has moved too quickly with the public safety building. He asked if the building would be built at this magnitude if the county did not receive this grant. He stated that the county has opportunities to spend money everyday. He said the top need as he sees it is space, not safety, and the county needs to pursue the real need. He stated that he is disappointed that the current empty buildings in the county have not been considered. He further added that he is in the Chrisney 4-H community building for meetings several times a month and it is in great shape. He said the boards are trapped in the idea of wanting something new and options could be pursued at a far less cost. He said if the current building is pursued, the residents of Spencer County will be in debt for 20 years.

Ebert stated that long range building planning has been going on for six or seven years, and the proposed public safety building is a win-win.

Kroeger explained that the county has looked at the office shortage problem for several years and not come up with an alternative any better until the grant came along. He stated that the central location is accessible to the whole community. He said the value of the courthouse should be considered; when it was built people made

sacrifices to have it. He stated that the public safety building is the same as any other community project; some sectors will sacrifice more than others.

Shelton stated that the Judge has said that the county will be in need of a second court room soon and having some offices move out of the courthouse would free up that space.

Logsdon stated that what is needed in this discussion is a facilitator who can help all of the leaders of the county put out all of the ideas and then rank them in importance. He said this would help with the FEMA Grant and community corrections. He stated we have no idea what the need for infrastructure in the county will be for the next 20 years and we do not want to get into a bind. With a facilitator the needs can be identified and then the county can list what we need, why we need it, and how it can be paid for.

Logsdon asked if the rental expenses are decreased, with the building of either building, would it offset the utilities of the new building. Gogel stated that a utility study was done last year and the cost was approximately \$10,698 per year.

Rininger stated the positives of the building the public safety building as being: the central location, tornado and earthquake safe emergency center, emergency ambulance service, centralized dispatch, generator can keep building in operation, and extension office at 4-H fair grounds. Rininger added that he likes the idea of having a facilitated meeting to come up with a consensus.

Lueken stated that it is important to have dispatch and emergency workers in a secure location.

Malone suggested the possibility of phasing out the local homestead credits paid for by COIT and putting those funds toward the building.

Lueken stated that he can arrange a facilitated meeting with Sue Ellspermann. Bunner stated that it should be a needs analysis and other offices should be involved. Rininger listed who should come to the meeting: Spencer County Council, Sheriff Kermitt Lindsey, Prosecutor Jon Dartt, Community Corrections, SCEMS, SCEMA, Advisory Plan Commission, Spencer County Dispatch, Health Department, Purdue Extension Office, all elected officials, Spencer County Circuit Court, and Spencer County Fire Chiefs.

Logsdon asked Gehlhausen how much time the county has to get this done. Gehlhausen said approximately one year, but the engineer will need time to finish the design.

Gogel said he takes offense to the statements that this project had happened quickly, because the boards have been studying this for several years. Bunner stated that the need for office space has been analyzed but the need for the public safety side has not.

Discussion was had on the possible dates and time. Lueken will contact Sue Ellspermann. Discussion was had on the budget process.

Kroeger made a motion to adjourn. Cochenour seconded. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 am.

Board of Commissioners,

President
Attest:

Cindy Shelton, Auditor

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